



Amphetamines

& other stimulants

Amphetamines are stimulant drugs. They 'speed up' the brain, which helps you stay alert and awake, and sometimes provide an 'energy burst'.



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

A.K.A.: Speed, Crystal meth, Ice, Shabu, Phet, Billy, Whizz, Sulph, Base, Paste, Dexies, Meth

Amphetamines have many different street names, but 'speed' and 'ice' are most common. They are supplied in different forms including powder, tablets, liquid, crystal and paste. A few prescription medicines include amphetamines as an ingredient. The possession, use, supply and manufacture of any other type of amphetamine is illegal in Australia. Most amphetamines are made illegally, often in unsafe conditions. The ingredients can vary a lot, so you never know how strong the drugs are, or even what's in them. This increases the risk that you will overdose or have other bad effects.



How are amphetamines taken?

Amphetamine can be swallowed, injected, smoked, inhaled or snorted, depending on the form that you buy.



What are the effects of amphetamines?

Effects straight after taking amphetamines can include:

- Feeling excited, happy and well
- Feeling more alert
- Having more energy
- Feeling more confident
- Being more talkative.

Effects that aren't so good can include:

- A dry mouth
- Headaches
- Tremors in the hands and fingers
- Blurred vision
- Trouble sleeping
- Sweating a lot
- Nausea, stomach cramps and dizziness
- Faster heart rate and higher body temperature
- Nervousness, panic, anxiety and paranoia
- Irritability that can cause aggression
- Psychosis, which can involve hallucinations, delusions and bizarre behaviour.

The effects you experience will depend on how strong the amphetamine is, the amount taken, and your body size. Other things that can affect your reaction include your health, your mood just before taking the drug, the way it has been taken, and whether you have taken other drugs.

The time taken for the drug to wear off depends on how much you have taken, and how you have taken it. Usually the effects last anywhere from one hour to six hours, and can be followed by symptoms like tension, depression, mood swings, aggression and exhaustion.



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How can amphetamines affect my physical health?

Amphetamines are often mixed with other substances or 'cutting agents' that can be dangerous. Using amphetamines a lot can cause some serious health problems, such as:

- High blood pressure and risk of a heart attack
- Weight loss, because your appetite is reduced
- Sleeping problems
- Increased risk of infections
- Damage to brain cells leading to problems with memory and thinking
- Dental problems from grinding your teeth
- Lung damage from smoking
- Damage to the lining of the nose from snorting
- Scarring, abscesses and vein damage from injecting
- Blood-borne viruses like hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV (the AIDS virus) from sharing needles.



How can amphetamines affect my mental health?

Amphetamines can cause psychosis, which means you have trouble telling what is real and what is not. This can lead to symptoms like paranoia, delusions, hallucinations and bizarre behaviour. Heavy use of amphetamines can trigger acute paranoid psychosis. Amphetamine use can also lead to delirium—a state of mental confusion and disorganisation.



What about withdrawal?

If you suddenly stop taking amphetamines after taking them for a while, you might have withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms can include hunger, extreme tiredness, restless sleep and nightmares, anxiety, panic, irritability and depression.

Managing your drug use

If you, your family or your friends think your drug use is becoming a problem, then get some help and talk to people about it. Changing your drug use can be hard work, but it will be worth it. Some people can reduce or stop drug use on their own, but think about talking to a trusted family member, friend, doctor or counsellor.

For more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the headspace website: www.headspace.org.au